

Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire

Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report

1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

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www.gloucestershire.gov.uk

Foreword from Executive Director



I am pleased to present the 2025–2026 Annual Report on Complaints, Compliments and Comments for Adult Social Care. Alongside our self-assessment and [Annual Report, *Making the Difference that Matters*](#), it shows how we listen to feedback, learn from people's experiences and use this to improve services.

During 2025–2026, we continued to respond to the findings from our Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment by strengthening governance, quality assurance, performance oversight and risk management. Complaints, compliments and comments remain an important source of insight, helping us understand what matters most to the people we support.

We have made progress in areas that matter to people, including reducing waiting times for Care Act assessments, improving financial assessment processes, strengthening support for unpaid carers, improving public information and expanding opportunities for co-production and lived experience to shape services.

We also recognise that improvement is ongoing. Some people continue to experience delays, unclear communication or repeated conversations. Our goal is not simply to reduce complaints, but to learn from feedback, improve people's experiences and demonstrate how that feedback leads to change.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their views, whether positive or critical. Your feedback helps us improve. I would also like to thank our staff for their commitment to supporting the people of Gloucestershire.

Together, we remain focused on making the difference that matters by listening, learning and improving the experience of care and support for adults, unpaid carers and communities across Gloucestershire.

Professor Sarah Scott

Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities.

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Executive summary

This report summarises Adult Social Care complaints, compliments and comments from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, alongside our Adult Social Care Annual Report and CQC self-assessment. Complaints help us understand where people's experience needs to improve, particularly around communication, timeliness, handovers, funding and charging explanations, and joined-up support.

Our refreshed [Adult Social Care Complaints Policy](#)¹ supports a clearer, person-centred approach focused on early resolution, accessibility, clear communication, proportionate investigation and learning from feedback to improve practice, quality assurance, commissioning, training, governance and service redesign.

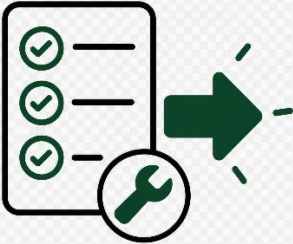
Summary of key findings in this report

Area of focus	What the information tells us
 Activity	• Adult Social Care supported a large number of people during the year. There were 22,145 assessments, 6,737 reviews and 50,216 contacts². • Complaints are a small part of all Adult Social Care activity, but they are important because they tell us where people's experience could be better. • To put this into context as a rate for every 1000 contacts we receive 2 (rounded up) complaints.
 Complaints	• We received 78 formal complaints in 2025/26. • This is fewer than in recent years. We received 88 complaints in 2024/25, and 88 complaints in 2023/24.

¹ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-adult-social-care>

² Data from Client Level Data (CLD) submissions

Area of focus	What the information tells us
 Response time	• 56% of complaints were answered within 20 working days. • This is below the standard we want to achieve. • It has got worse compared with 63% in 2023/24 and 2024/25, and 73% in 2022/23. This is an area for improvement.
 Acknowledgement	• 47% of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days. • This is also below the standard we want to achieve. Some services are doing better than others. • We need to make this more consistent across Adult Social Care.
 What people told us	• The most common reason people complained was communication. This appeared in 47 complaints. • People also complained about charges or frequency of service, quality or appropriateness of service, delivery or non-delivery of service, and staff attitude or behaviour. • We received some lovely compliments about our staff positive and friendly attitudes, making a real difference to people's lives. As well as the timeliness of some of the teams.
 Outcome	• 49% of completed complaints were upheld or partly upheld. • This means nearly half of completed complaints found that something could have been done better. • This shows why complaints are an important source of learning.

Area of focus	What the information tells us
 Service focus	• The services with the most complaints in 2025/26 were Finance including FAB, GELS, Hospital Social Work / Discharge and Assessment, Cotswold Social Care and Cheltenham Social Care. • Some of these services also had lower response or acknowledgement times.
 Learning	• Complaints show that people want clearer communication, quicker responses, better explanations about decisions and fewer handovers between teams. • They also show that finance and charging information must be clear, timely and easy to understand.
 Our Learning into Action Priorities for 2026-2027	• Communicate clearly and respond to complaints promptly by keeping people informed and explaining decisions well. • Improve ownership and coordination so people know who is responsible for resolving their concerns. • Use feedback to drive improvement by turning learning into actions and demonstrating what has changed. • Listen to people and improve their experience by using feedback, equality information and our <i>You Said, We Did</i> approach to shape services.

1. Background and introduction

This report provides an overview of complaints and feedback received about Gloucestershire County Council's Adult Social Care services during 2025–2026, in line with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the updated 2025 guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The [LGSCO's new guide](#)³, launched in February 2025, reinforces the importance of a single-stage complaints process and encourages early, person-centred resolution wherever possible. It aims to ensure consistency in how complaints are handled across the country and to promote a culture of fairness, transparency, and learning. The guidance also clarifies the rights of service users and the responsibilities of local authorities, with a strong emphasis on enabling people to live independently and with dignity.

During 2025–2026, Gloucestershire introduced a refreshed Adult Social Care Complaints Policy. The policy makes the process clearer, more consistent and easier to use. It reflects national guidance and supports early resolution where possible, while making sure formal complaints are handled fairly and openly.

The policy explains what people can expect when they complain. This includes prompt acknowledgement, clear investigation, regular updates, reasonable adjustments, advocacy where needed and learning from feedback so services can improve.

Our ambition is to:

- make it easy for people to raise concerns
- resolve issues early where we can
- handle complaints fairly, clearly and on time
- keep people informed if timescales change
- provide adjustments, advocacy or other support where needed
- use feedback to improve services and strengthen accountability.

Anyone who receives, has received, or is seeking Adult Social Care support from

³ <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2025/feb/adult-care-complaints-guide-launched>

Gloucestershire County Council can make a complaint. A representative can also complain on their behalf. This includes services arranged by the Council and delivered by external providers.

We use a single-stage complaints process. If someone is still unhappy after our response, they can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to review their complaint independently.

This report is for people who use services, unpaid carers, families, representatives, staff, providers, elected members, Healthwatch Gloucestershire, the Care Quality Commission and the wider public. It supports our commitment to listen, be open and keep improving.

Our commitment

Gloucestershire County Council wants everyone to have a clear, accessible and fair way to raise concerns about Adult Social Care services. Our refreshed Adult Social Care Complaints Policy explains how people can complain, what they can expect from us, and how we will use feedback to improve services.

How people can complain

People can complain in the way that works best for them. This may include:

- using our online form - <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-adult-social-care>
- phoning us - 01452 427 082
- sending an email or letter - Contact details are available on our website.
- speaking to us in person - At any council office or through your social care worker

We will make reasonable adjustments where needed. This may include interpreters, accessible formats, advocacy or other support.

Key principles

Our complaints approach is based on five simple principles:

- **One clear process:** we aim to resolve complaints as early as possible, without unnecessary escalation.

- **Person-centred:** we listen to people, focus on their experience and try to understand what outcome they are looking for.
- **Accessible:** people should be able to complain in a way that suits them, with support where needed.
- **Clear and timely:** we use plain English, respond as quickly as we can and keep people informed if there are delays.
- **Learning and improvement:** we use complaints to understand what needs to change and to improve services.

Who can complain

Anyone who receives, has received, or is seeking Adult Social Care support from Gloucestershire County Council can make a complaint. A representative can also complain on their behalf. This includes services arranged by the Council and delivered by external providers.

We will acknowledge your complaint and aim to respond within 20 working days. If your complaint is complex or involves multiple services, we will agree to a realistic timescale with you and keep you informed throughout.

If you remain dissatisfied after receiving our response, you have the right to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, who provides an independent and impartial review.

More detail on this process is described on the [Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire Complaints website](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-adult-social-care/) (<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-adult-social-care/>)

Information and accessibility

We are committed to making sure everyone has equal access to the complaints process. People can raise a complaint in any format they wish, including online, by phone, by email, by letter or in person.

Our refreshed complaints policy places stronger emphasis on accessibility, reasonable adjustments and advocacy. This means we will consider what support a person may need to make a complaint, understand the process, provide information,

take part in the investigation and receive the outcome in a format that works for them.

Where needed, we can arrange interpreters, accessible information, large print, Easy Read, translation, or support from an advocate or representative. We will also continue to improve how we explain the complaints process, so it is clear, plain English and easy to understand.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Gloucestershire County Council is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who use Adult Social Care services. We manage complaints in line with data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

We collect and process personal information so that we can investigate and respond to complaints, meet our statutory responsibilities, and learn from feedback. This may include information about adults who draw on care and support, unpaid carers, families, representatives, staff or providers. We only collect information that is relevant and necessary for the complaint and we handle it securely.

Key Principles of confidentiality:

- **Purpose Limitation:** Personal data is used solely for the purpose of managing and resolving complaints, and for service improvement where appropriate.
- **Data Minimisation:** We only collect information that is relevant and necessary.
- **Security:** All data is stored securely, and access is restricted to authorised personnel.
- **Retention:** Personal data is retained in accordance with the Council's [Records Retention and Disposal Schedule](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/how-we-manage-information/records-management/how-long-do-we-keep-records-for/)⁴, or longer where legally required (e.g. for ongoing complaints or legal claims).
- **Transparency:** Individuals are informed about how their data will be used, and their rights under data protection law.

⁴ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/how-we-manage-information/records-management/how-long-do-we-keep-records-for/>

Where appropriate, anonymised data may be used for reporting and analysis to help us improve services and identify trends. We will never share personal information without consent unless required to do so by law or where there is a safeguarding concern.

We also ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support individuals in accessing the complaints process, including the provision of interpreters, advocates, or alternative formats.

For more information on how we manage personal data, please refer to our [Privacy Notices online](#)⁵ and [Information on how long we keep records for](#)⁶.

⁵ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/data-protection/privacy-notices>

⁶ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/how-we-manage-information/records-management/how-long-do-we-keep-records-for>

2. The data

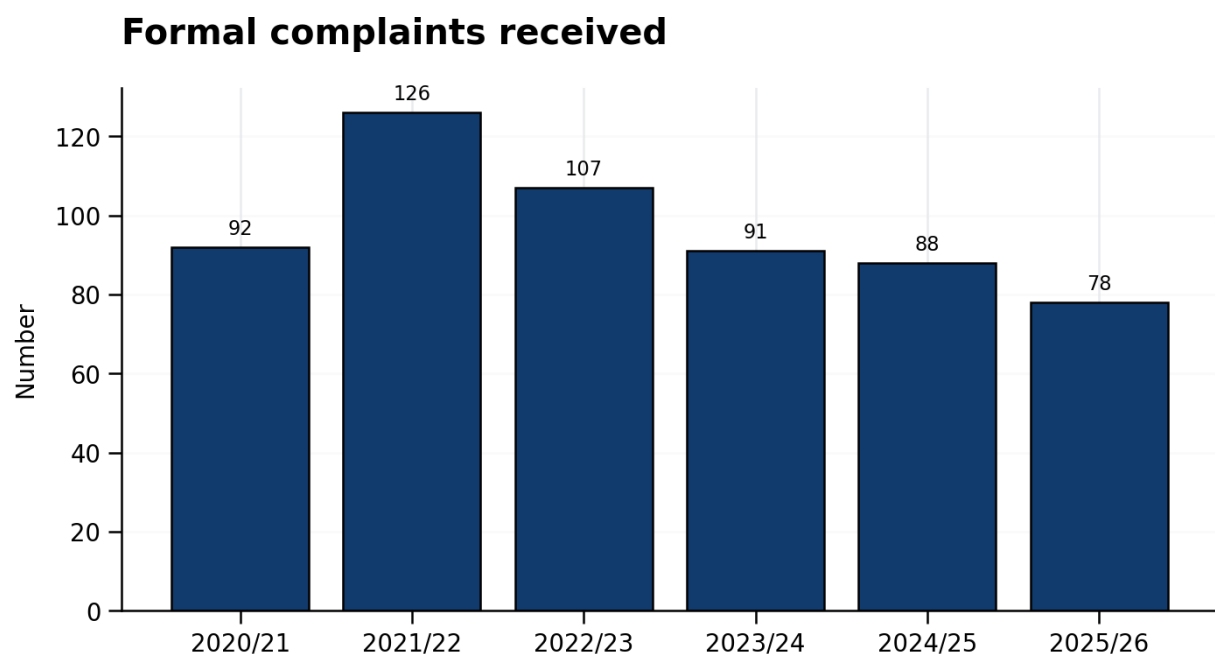
Overview of the data

This section summarises Adult Social Care complaints recorded for 2025–2026 and compares the latest position with recent years. It should be read alongside the wider learning section because complaints are not only a measure of activity; they are also a source of intelligence about people’s experience, service quality, communication, timeliness and the effectiveness of improvement activity.

The year-on-year data shows that complaint volumes have reduced, but this should be interpreted carefully. A lower number of complaints does not automatically mean that people’s experience has improved. The most important message is that timeliness and consistency need focused attention. The 2025–2026 position shows weaker performance for both 20 working day responses and 2 working day acknowledgements. This will require clearer ownership, stronger monitoring and better escalation where complaints involve more than one team or service area.

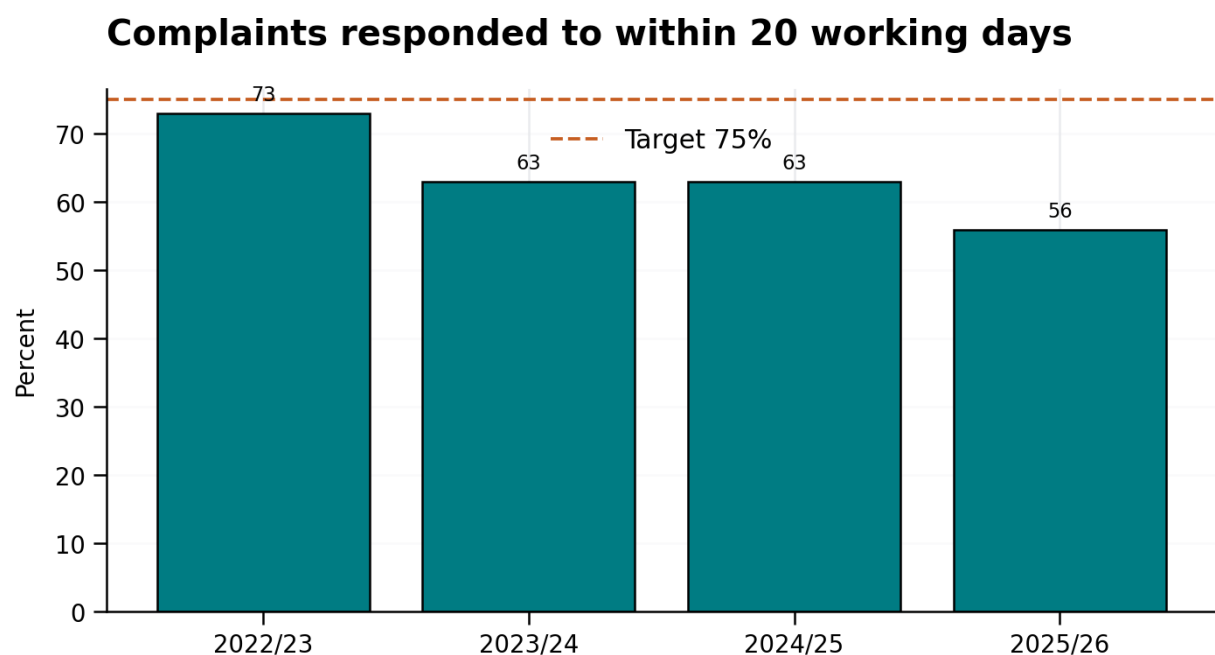
In 2025–2026, Adult Social Care received **78 formal stage 1 complaints**. Of these, **72 complaints were completed** and **6 remained open or subject to monitoring** at the point of reporting. Complaint volumes have reduced compared with 88 complaints in both 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, and 107 complaints in 2022–2023.

Chart 1 - Year on year complaints trend



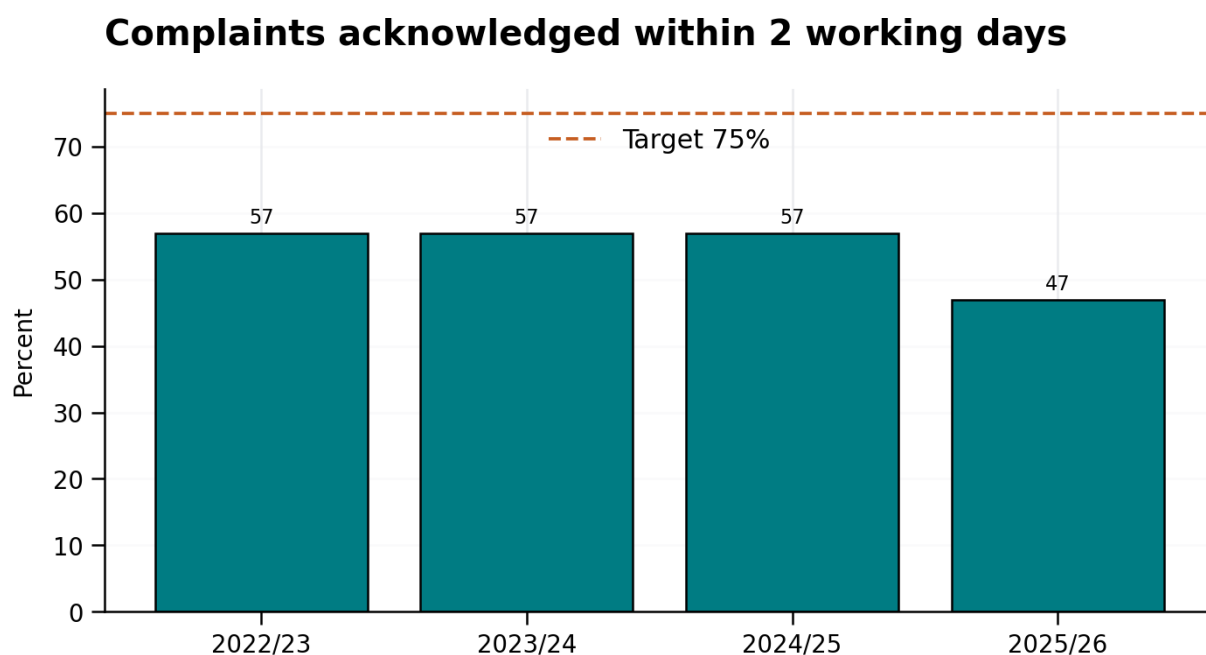
While the reduction in complaint numbers is positive, timeliness remains a clear area for improvement. In 2025–2026, **56%** of complaints were responded to within **20 working days**, compared with 63% in 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, and 73% in 2022–2023. Complaints that take longer than 20 working days are often more complex, involve several teams, or need detailed input from operational, finance, commissioning or provider services. However, the data shows that the overall response position is not yet consistent enough.

Chart 2 - 20 Working Day response (target is 75%)



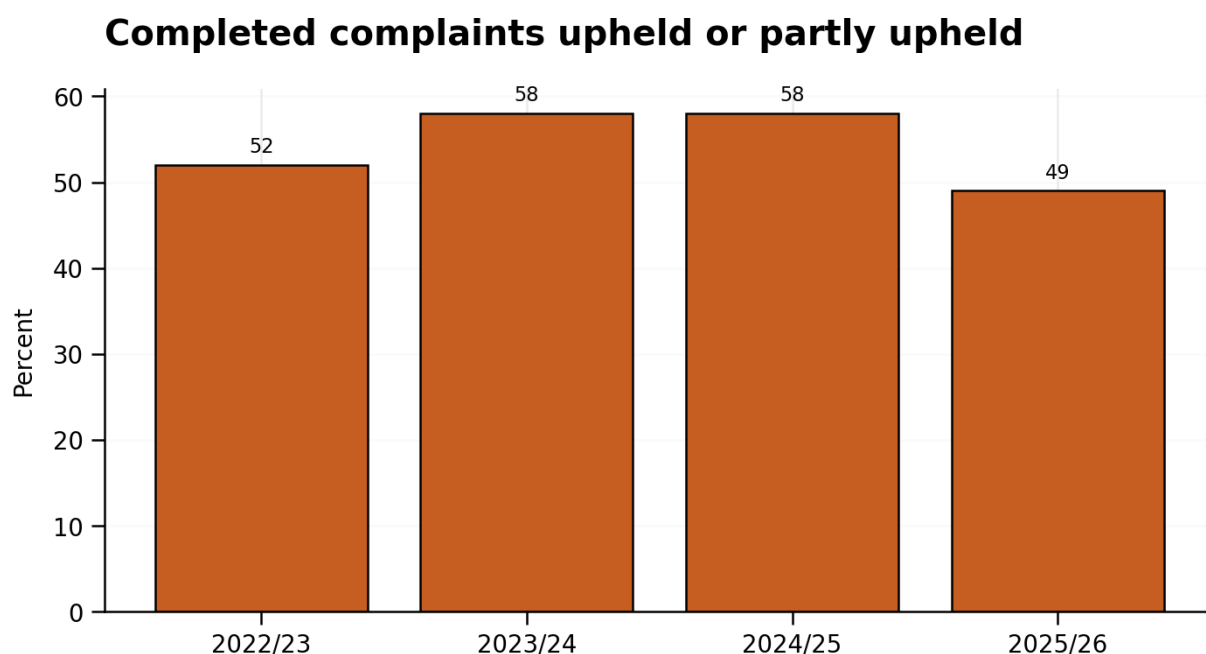
Acknowledgement performance also needs to improve. In 2025–2026, **50%** of complaints were acknowledged within **2 working days**. This is below the standard we want to achieve and shows that early communication with people who complain needs to be more consistent across Adult Social Care.

Chart 3 - Acknowledgement within 2 working days (Target is 75%)



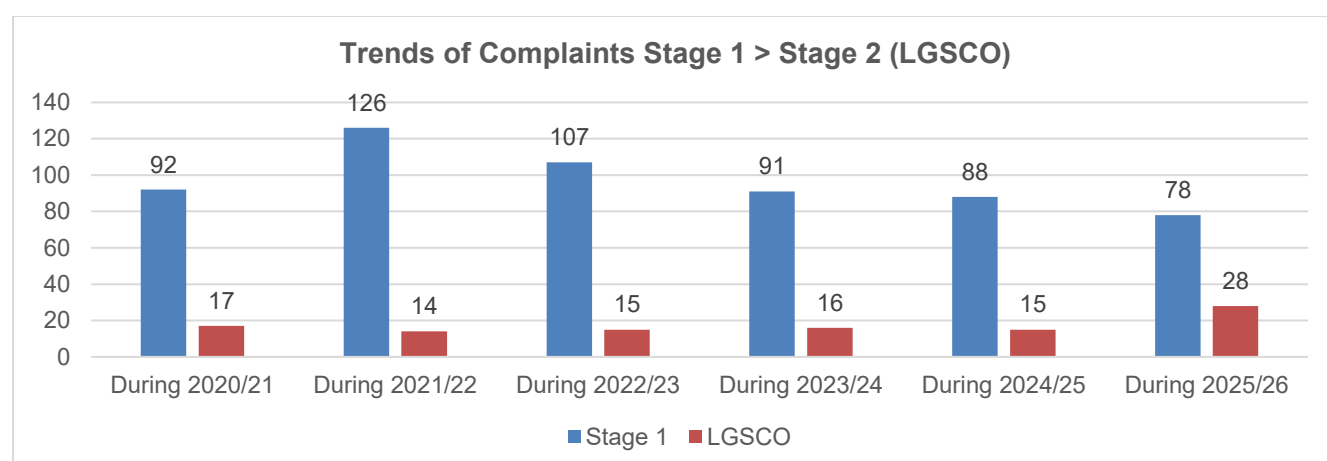
Of the completed complaints, **49%** were upheld or partly upheld. This indicates that something could have been done better in a substantial proportion of completed cases, while recognising that annual percentages are based on a relatively small number of complaints.

Chart 4 - % Upheld or partially upheld



Number of Adult Social Care complaints managed at:	During 2020/21	During 2021/22	During 2022/23	During 2023/24	During 2024/25	During 2025/26
Stage 1	92	126	107	91	88	78
LGSCO	17	14	15	16	15	28

Chart 5 - Trends of Complaints from Stage 1 - Stage 2



Service-level analysis⁷

For public reporting, service-level information is grouped to avoid over-interpreting small numbers or presenting individual complaints as wider service trends. Detailed team-level information should continue to be used internally with service activity, caseload, complexity and other quality evidence.

⁷ Small-number caution

A small number of complaints can identify important individual learning, but it is not a reliable measure of a whole service's quality. Service comparisons should only be made when appropriate activity denominators and wider assurance evidence are available.

Table 1 - Top complaints received in 25/26 by service area

Service area	YTD complaints	Open / monitoring	% 20WD response	% 2WD acknowledgement	Average response days	Learning themes
Finance including FAB	12	1	42%	67%	20.8	Disability-related expenditure, invoices, financial assessment delays, charging explanations and handovers.
Hospital Social Work / Discharge & Assessment	11	1	45%	55%	21.1	Complaints often happen when people move between hospital, home and short-term care. We are using this learning to improve hospital social work support, financial processes, discharge guidance and the new Home First and Community Reablement model, so support is clearer and more joined up.
GELS (Equipment Loans Service)	10	0	80%	90%	13.0	Equipment, adaptations, delivery or collection, responsiveness, call backs and clarity about next steps.
Cotswold Social Care	8	0	100%	50%	11.7	Assessment timeliness, care and support decisions, communication about charges and staff approach.

Service area	YTD complaints	Open / monitoring	% 20WD response	% 2WD acknowledgement	Average response days	Learning themes
Cheltenham Social Care	7	1	43%	14%	24.7	Communication, ownership, funding explanations, Mental Capacity Act issues and keeping people informed.
Tewkesbury Social Care	6	1	17%	17%	24.3	Service coordination, assessment decisions, communication, ownership and response timeliness.
LD Operations	6	0	50%	50%	12.0	Assessment and support planning, care arrangements, communication and clarity about decisions.
Gloucester Social Care	5	1	40%	40%	25.3	Communication, timeliness, assessment decisions, ownership and keeping people updated.
Stroud Social Care	4	0	50%	0%	22.7	Communication, timeliness, clarity of care arrangements, ownership and follow-up.
Forest Social Care	4	0	100%	50%	13.8	Pathway clarity, ownership, assessment or review timeliness and communication.
Other Low Volume areas (Teams who had less than	5	1	67%	67%	5.7	Insufficient for service-level conclusions; cases should inform individual learning and wider

Service area	YTD complaints	Open / monitoring	% 20WD response	% 2WD acknowledgement	Average response days	Learning themes
3 complaints in the year)						thematic review.

What the service-level data shows

The data shows that complaint volume and timeliness risks are not spread evenly across Adult Social Care. Finance including FAB recorded the highest number of complaints, followed by Hospital Social Work / Discharge and Assessment, and GELS. These higher-volume areas should remain a focus for service-level oversight during 2026–2027.

However, the table should not be read as a simple ranking of complaint volume. Some services with fewer complaints also show weaker acknowledgement or response performance. This means improvement activity needs to consider both the number of complaints received and how consistently complaints are acknowledged, progressed and responded to.

Shared learning themes

A complaint can include more than one issue, so theme totals exceed the number of complaints. The chart shows counts of recorded issues, not numbers of people or service failure rates. More detail can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Communication was the most frequently recorded issue. Finance and charging, quality or appropriateness, delivery, staff approach and assessment decisions were also recorded. These themes are used with other evidence to identify priorities for improvement; they have not been treated as standalone measures of service performance.

Chart 6 - Complaint themes recorded in 2025-2026

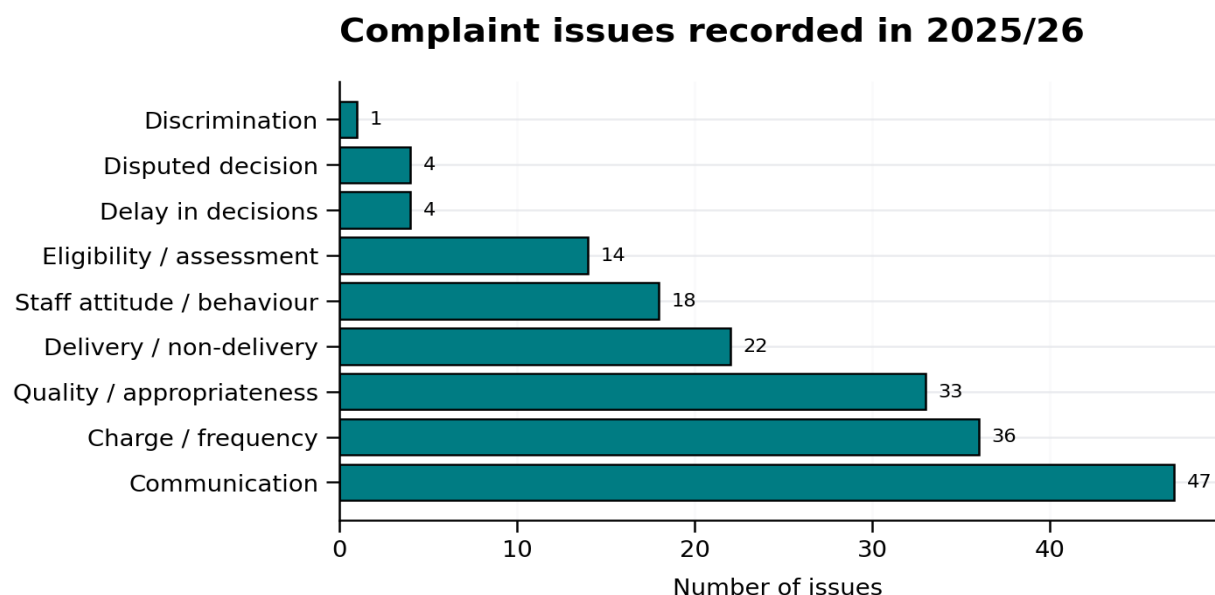


Chart 6 - Complaint themes recorded in 2025-2026, shows that communication remains the most common theme in complaints. People most often told us about delays in getting information, not being kept informed, or decisions and plans not being explained clearly. Finance and charging also remain a significant theme, especially where people did not understand charges, invoices, disability-related expenditure decisions or changes to financial support.

The chart also shows that complaints are often about the whole experience of Adult Social Care, not just one decision. Themes such as delays, care quality, delivery of support, staff approach and unclear ownership show why we need to keep improving communication, timeliness and coordination between teams and providers.

Chart 7 - Complaint themes by financial year

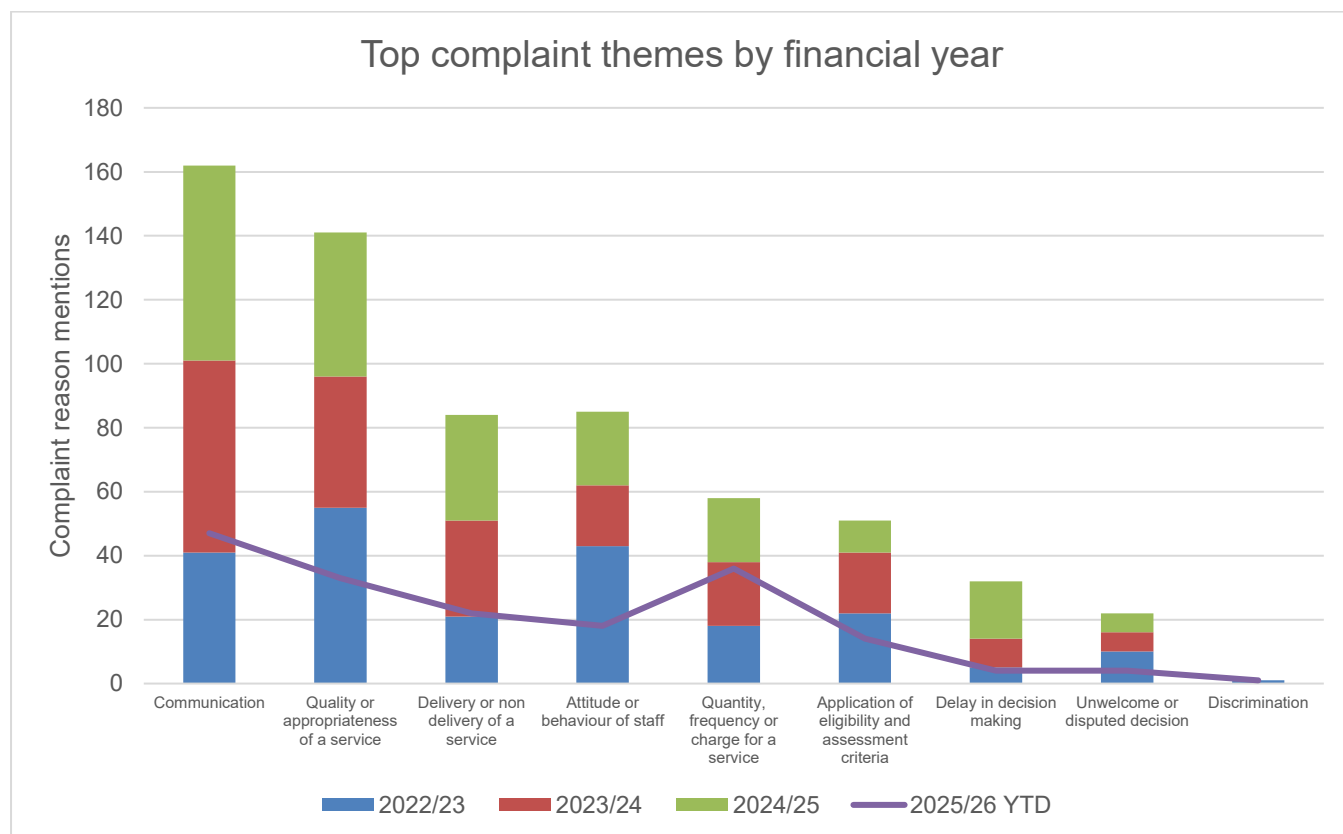
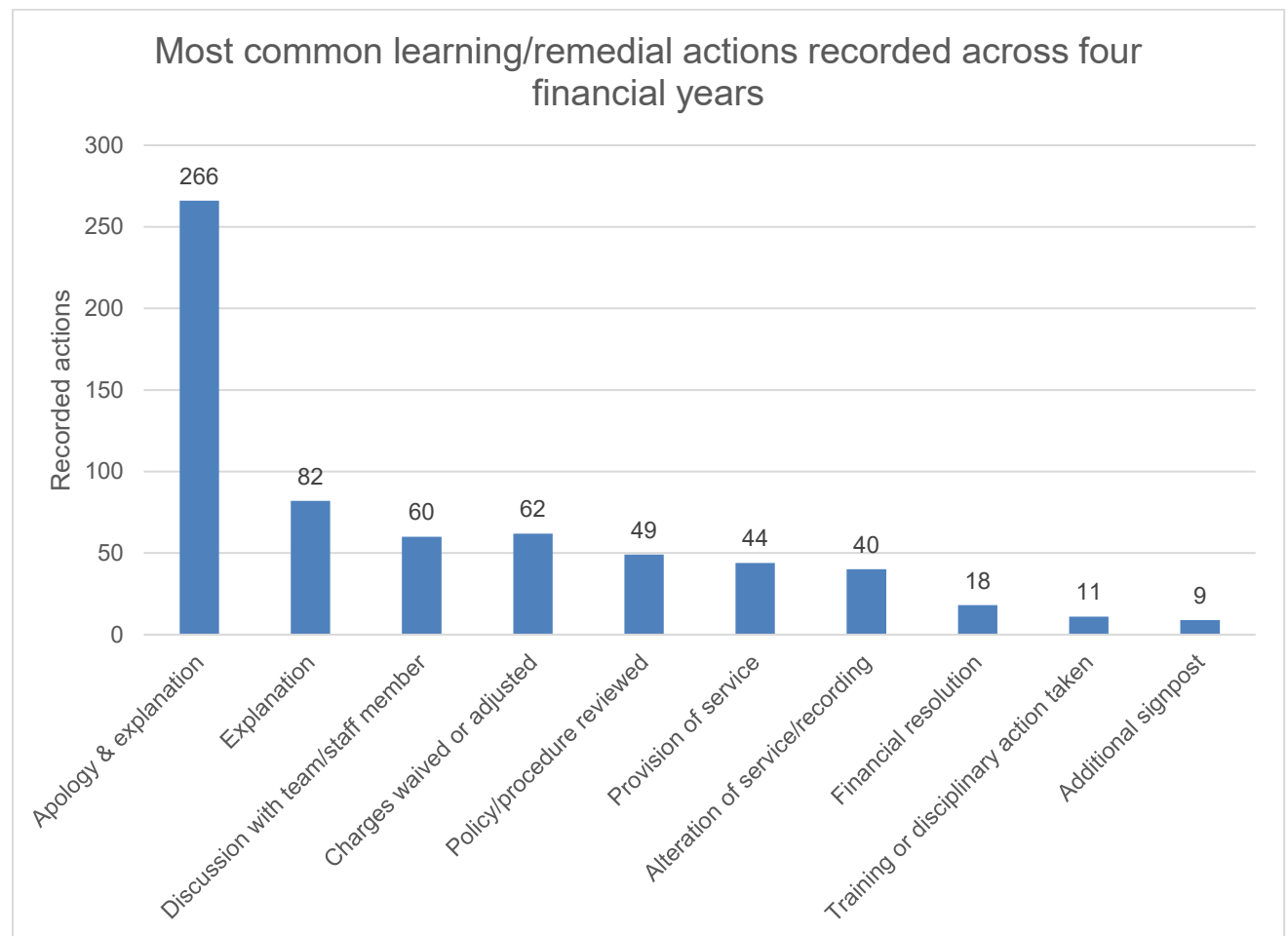


Chart 8 shows the types of actions most often recorded when complaints led to learning or a remedy. These actions include apologies, explanations, reminders to staff, changes to practice, improved communication, reviews of decisions and actions to put things right for the person affected.

This shows that complaints are being used to identify learning, but the next step is to make sure actions are followed through and checked for impact. We need to be able to show that learning has led to practical changes, such as clearer information, better handovers, more timely responses and more consistent explanations for people and families.

Chart 8 - Most common learning/remedial actions recorded over the last 3 years



3. Learning and improvement themes

Complaints show that people's experience is shaped by the whole journey through Adult Social Care, not just by individual decisions. In 2025–2026, we received **78 formal complaints**. Of the **72 completed complaints**, **49%** were upheld or partly upheld, showing that there were areas where we could have done better.

Key learning themes

- communication and delays
- unclear decisions or explanations
- charging and financial assessments
- handovers between teams
- care quality and recording
- unclear ownership of next steps.

These themes were most visible in finance, hospital discharge and some locality social care teams. They show that people can feel frustrated when they have to repeat their story, wait too long for a response, receive unclear information, or are passed between teams without clear ownership.

What needs to improve

People need clearer information, quicker replies and fewer avoidable handovers. We need to explain decisions better, especially around care charges, disability-related expenditure, financial assessments, invoices, assessments, reviews and discharge from hospital. Where more than one team, provider or organisation is involved, people need to know who is responsible and what will happen next.

What we are doing

We have already begun to act on this learning. Our refreshed complaints policy sets clearer expectations for early contact, updates, realistic timescales, plain English responses and learning from feedback.

We are also strengthening financial assessment and charging through clearer process controls, a practitioner checklist, better use of online financial assessments and closer monitoring.

Complaint learning is being used alongside Care Act audits, quality assurance, feedback from people, performance data and provider information. This helps us understand where practice is strong, where it varies, and where changes are needed across teams, providers and services.

Market context

The Adult Social Care Market Update reported to Scrutiny in February 2026 highlights the importance of strong market oversight. Adult Social Care supports around **6,300 adults** at any one time.

There are strengths in the local care market. **82.1% of care homes** were rated Good or Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission, with no care homes rated Inadequate. Community-based services were less strong, with **62.8%** rated Good or Outstanding and a higher proportion requiring improvement or not yet rated.

What has changed

We have strengthened market oversight, commissioning and quality assurance. The Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Framework gives a clearer view of provider quality, safeguarding, complaints, workforce and risk.

Complaints are now considered alongside safeguarding concerns, Care Quality Commission ratings, inspection findings, provider information, contract monitoring, quality visits and feedback from people and families. This helps us identify risks earlier, escalate concerns and target support.

Where concerns are found, providers may be asked to review policies, improve staffing or rotas, strengthen supervision, update training, improve records, respond to complaint themes or develop improvement plans. Complaint themes are also shared with providers so learning can improve practice beyond individual cases.

Overall message

This is a balanced picture of commissioned care. Many services provide good quality care and support, and there are clear strengths in parts of the market. However, complaints and quality information show that improvement is still needed where

people experience poor communication, delays, inconsistent support or unclear routes for raising concerns.

Our aim is to work in partnership with providers while maintaining clear accountability for the quality and safety of care arranged by the Council. We want people and families to feel confident that concerns are listened to, acted on and used to improve services.

Priorities for 2026–2027

Overall, the service-level data supports four shared priorities for 2026–2027:

1. **Improve communication and timeliness** by acknowledging complaints promptly, keeping people updated, explaining decisions clearly and reducing avoidable delays.
2. **Strengthen ownership and coordination** by making it clearer who is responsible when more than one team, provider, finance process or pathway is involved.
3. **Turn learning into visible improvement** by using complaints, audits, feedback and performance data together to agree actions, check impact and show what has changed.
4. **Improve people's experience and access to feedback** by linking complaints learning to the Listening to People work, experience statements, equality monitoring and the "You Said, We Did" approach.

4. Compliments

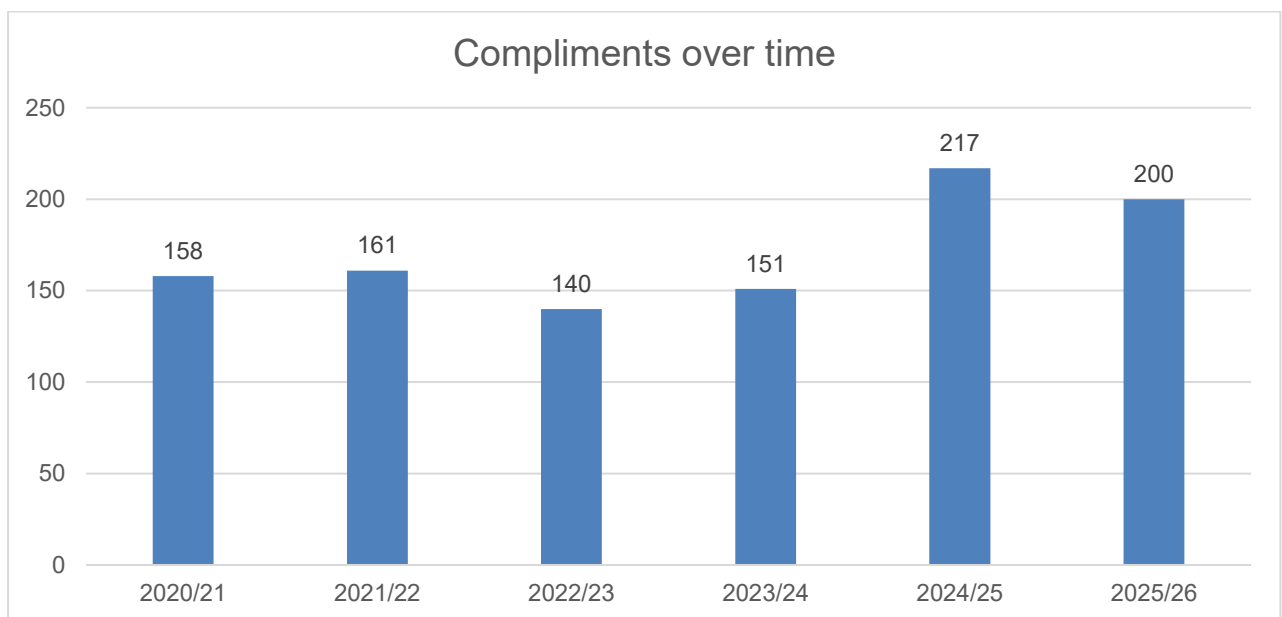
Managers are encouraged to log the compliments they receive as learning is derived from positive feedback, as well as negative.

During 2025-2026, 200 compliments were logged centrally regarding Adult Social Care. The majority of compliments related to members of staff. Trends around compliments have remained fairly consistent over the last 6 years (6 year rolling average 171 compliments per year).

Table 2 - Compliments over time

Adult Social Care Services Compliments received by year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	158	161	140	151	217	200

Chart 9 - Compliments received over time



Below are some examples of compliments received this year.



*"I cannot thank ***** enough for her involvement with my particular case. Unfortunately, I ended up really poorly after months of abuse by a county line drug gang where I was sexually abused, exploited to drugs and to put it blankly ruined my life. If it wasn't for xxx and the mental health team to spot the signs of my abuse, I can honestly sit here and say I wouldn't be here. With ***** unconditional support and her sheer determination I wouldn't be clean of drugs engaging with support, start my housing journey and start accessing the support I need. I was in hospital over Christmas and four months on I didn't think I'd be here where I am today. She honestly deserves so much recognition, and it brings me to tears when I talk about the compassion and what she and her fabulous team have managed to achieve for me and what that has now made my life look like. I wish she could see the weight I've put on and the smile that is on my face even through the hard days. Thank to her my hard days are no longer my worst days!!!!"*



*"I just wanted to thank you for the way you conducted ***** review yesterday. Your time, patience and social skills engaging ***** and interacting with her were commendable. In a world where budgets are constrained and 'tick box' exercises are the norm it was a pleasure to witness.*

****** is a wonderful person, full of interest, love and empathy. She deserves the time and interest you afforded her. Her care and support needs are not complex but are real."*



*"Just a note to say how fabulous your delivery guys were yesterday and bringing equipment on loan to my elderly parents in appalling weather conditions. Thanks to *****"*



*"None of this would have been possible without you. I honestly feel so blessed that you were assigned to ***** case. From the first moment we spoke, you have shown such incredible empathy and care and I knew I was in safe hands. "*



"There have been many times when you have called and patiently listened to me, often at the end of the day, when anyone else would have been on their way home. You truly have gone above and beyond. Quite simply, you have made a huge difference and one I will never forget."

5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If someone remains dissatisfied after receiving the Council's response to their Adult Social Care complaint, they can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to review their complaint. The LGSCO is independent of the Council and provides the final stage of review where someone believes their complaint has not been resolved.

However, local information and case-level learning are available and have been used to inform this section. This includes local complaint records, decisions received from the LGSCO, remedies agreed, and learning discussed through complaints, legal, governance and risk management arrangements. The section therefore focuses on what we know locally, while recognising that the national published dataset will need to be reviewed once it becomes available.

The local learning is consistent with wider complaint and audit themes. LGSCO cases have reinforced the need for clearer explanations, timely communication, accurate records, evidence-based financial assessment decisions, better handling of disability-related expenditure, and clear ownership where more than one team or service is involved.

The refreshed Adult Social Care Complaints Policy supports stronger local resolution before issues escalate to the Ombudsman. It sets clearer expectations for early resolution, accessibility, proportionate investigation, realistic timescales, keeping people informed and ensuring learning is captured. This is important because a clear and fair local complaints process can reduce avoidable escalation and improve people's confidence that their concerns have been heard and acted on.

During 2026/2027, we will use LGSCO decisions to strengthen learning in three ways:

- by identifying any recurring themes that require service-wide action;
- by ensuring agreed remedies are completed and recorded;
- and by sharing wider learning through complaints reporting, the Adults Quality Assurance Board, Practice Quality Board, risk management group and relevant operational or commissioning governance meetings.

Chart 10 - LGSCO complaints and decisions year-on-year trends

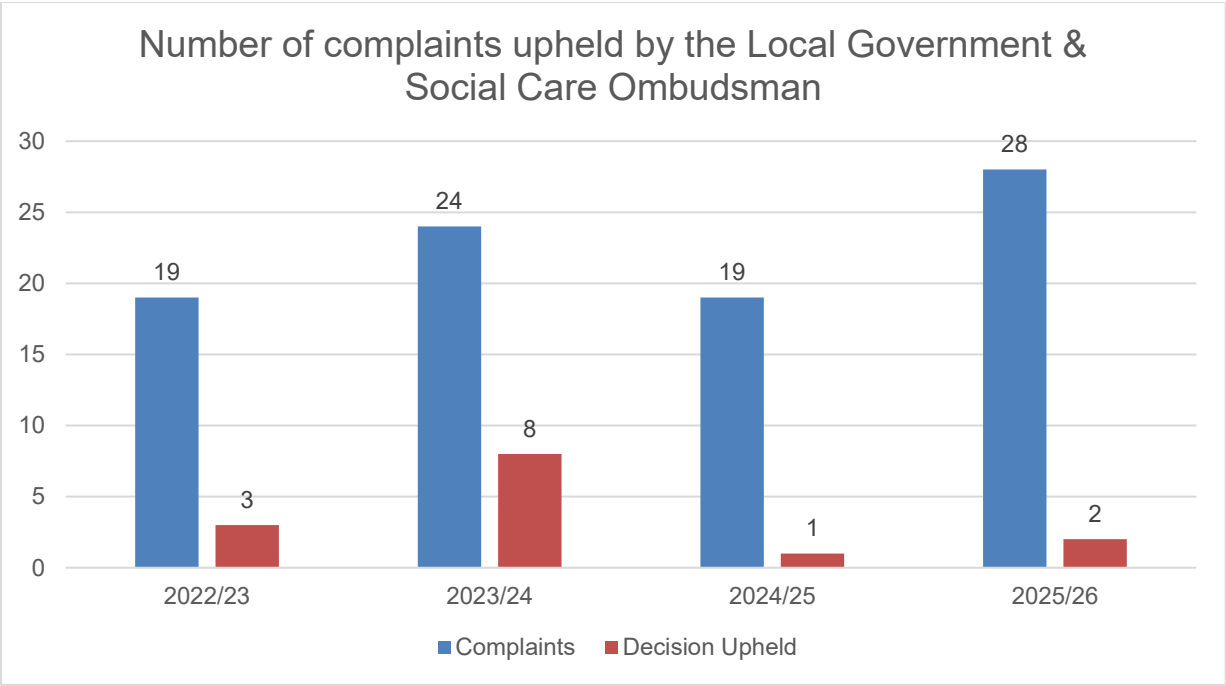


Chart 11 - LGSCO complaint themes year-on-year

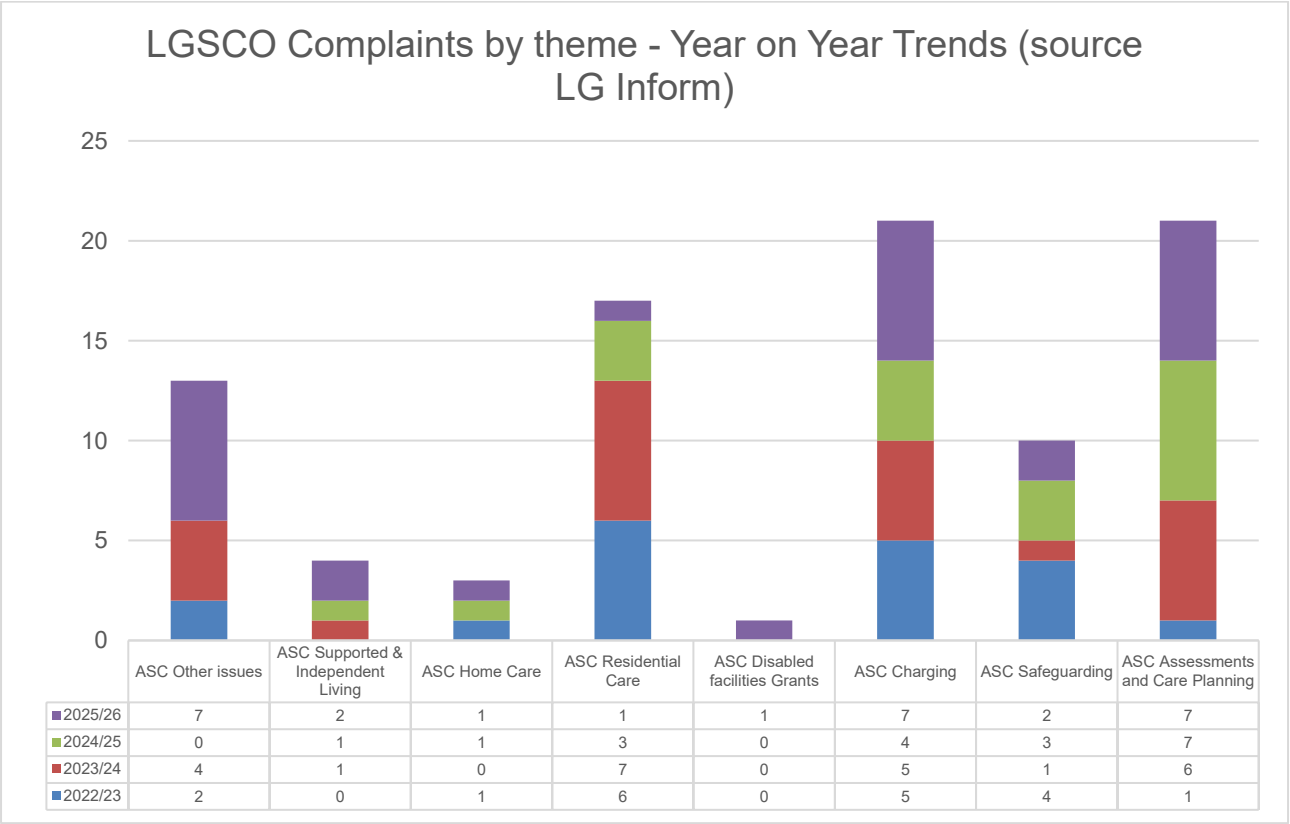


Table 3 - LGSCO decisions for 2025/2026.

Local LGSCO decision information available at the time of writing, year ending 31 March 2026				
Closed after initial inquiry	Premature	No fault	Fault / injustice	No decision made
5	3	3	2	15

The table below supports the Section 3 narrative by showing the 2025/2026 LGSCO cases where fault and injustice were found. These cases provide important assurance and learning because they show where local complaint handling, assessment, financial assessment, charging, communication and decision-making need to be strengthened. The findings are being used alongside our refreshed Adult Social Care Complaints Policy, financial assessment improvement work, audit learning and quality assurance governance so that recommendations are completed and wider learning is embedded.

Table 4 - Details of upheld cases 2025-2026

Case reference	Summary of complaint	Decision	Remedy and learning
25002870	Charging	Upheld – fault and injustice	Apology; financial redress for avoidable distress/time and trouble; financial redress for quantifiable loss; information/advice to the person affected; organisational-led improvement plan.
25011576	Other Adult Care Services issue	Upheld – fault and injustice	Apology; training and/or guidance.

6. Comments and Member of Parliament contacts

In addition to managing the statutory complaints procedure and administrating the compliments process, the Complaints Team also deal with a number of other letters and contacts which are usually classed as comments. These contacts are generally concerns or requests for information that can be dealt with without recourse to the formal complaints' procedure. In most cases these are dealt with within 1-2 working days of receipt.

Table 5 - Comments over time

Adult Social Care Services comments/concerns received by year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	203	204	122	197

Of the 197 comments/concerns, 56 were made via MP's offices or from Councillors around the county. This represents an increase on the previous year where 10 comments/concerns were recorded by the team from Councillors/MP's offices.

7. Who is using the Complaints Procedure?

This section looks at who is using the Adult Social Care complaints process and what we know from the equality and demographic information available to us. Understanding who raises complaints helps us check whether the process is accessible, whether any groups may be under-represented, and whether we need to do more to support people to share feedback in a way that works for them.

The information currently available gives us a partial picture. Some people provide equality information when they complain, but not everyone chooses to do so. For this reason, the data should be treated with care. It can help us identify broad patterns, but it should not be used to draw firm conclusions about all people who complain or all people who use Adult Social Care services.

Complaints may be raised directly by people who use Adult Social Care services, or by family members, unpaid carers, representatives or advocates acting on their behalf. This is important because some people may need support to make a complaint, explain what has happened, or take part in the complaints process.

Equality information

- Where equality information is provided, we use it to understand whether the complaints process is reaching different groups of people.
- The information available shows that not all equality fields are completed. This limits how much we can say about representation and access.
- No discrimination complaint themes were recorded in the reasons analysis for 2025–2026. However, this does not mean that equality, access or inclusion issues were absent. It means they were not recorded under the discrimination complaint categories in the available data.
- Some complaint themes still have equality relevance, including communication, accessibility, financial information, advocacy, support for unpaid carers, and reasonable adjustments.

What this tells us

The available information suggests that the complaints process is used by a range of people, including people receiving support and those acting on their behalf.

However, the data also shows that we need to improve how consistently equality information is collected, recorded and used. Better information will help us understand whether some people face barriers to complaining or whether some communities are less likely to raise concerns formally.

This matters because complaints are one-way people can tell us when something has gone wrong. If some people are less able, less confident or less likely to complain, we may miss important learning about their experience. Improving equality information will therefore support our wider commitment to fair access, reasonable adjustments, advocacy, inclusive communication and listening to people whose voices are less often heard.

What we will do next

- improve the consistency of equality monitoring in the complaints process
- make sure people know they do not have to provide equality information, but that it helps us improve access and fairness

- use equality information alongside complaints, compliments, feedback, surveys and engagement activity to understand who we are hearing from and who we may not be hearing from
- continue to offer reasonable adjustments, interpreters, accessible formats and advocacy where needed
- strengthen links between complaints learning, equality monitoring and the People's Experience work so that barriers to access are identified and acted on.

8. Conclusion

This report shows that complaints, compliments and comments are an important part of how Adult Social Care listens, learns and improves. They help us understand what people value, what has worked well, where people have not had the experience, they should, and where we need to act more consistently across all teams and services.

What we have heard

People told us they want Adult Social Care to be easier to understand, quicker to respond and more joined up. The main messages were about clearer communication, fewer handovers, better explanations and support that reflects what matters to people and unpaid carers.

Positive feedback also showed what good support looks like: being listened to, treated with dignity and receiving reliable support that helps people stay safe, well and independent.

Our People's Experience work helped us hear directly from people and communities about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Using people's experience

People have told us they value being listened to, clear information, respectful relationships and reliable support. They have also told us that poor communication, delays, complicated systems and digital exclusion can make it harder to get the right help.

Turning learning into action

We will use complaints, compliments, comments, audits, safeguarding learning, survey results, Healthwatch feedback, provider information, performance data and people's lived experience together. This will help us see the full picture of people's journeys through Adult Social Care.

We will use this learning to agree what needs to change, take action, check whether it has made a difference and share learning across teams. The aim is to make practical improvements people can see and experience.

What we will do next

Over the next year, we will focus on four shared priorities: improving communication and timeliness; strengthening ownership and coordination; turning learning into visible improvement; and improving people's experience and access to feedback.

We will also improve how we collect and use feedback. The Listening to People work will support a new Adult Social Care feedback approach, co-designed with residents, so we can better understand what matters to people and whether changes are improving their experience.

The new approach will gather feedback against a set of experience statements developed with residents and tested through engagement activity. These reflect the aspects of care and support that people told us are most important:

- I knew what to expect from Adult Social Care.
- I was listened to.
- I was involved in decisions about my care and support.
- My individual needs were considered.
- I was helped to understand what would happen next.
- I knew who to contact if I needed to.
- I was kept informed about timescales and any delays.
- I had a good overall experience.

We will bring this feedback together to identify themes, celebrate what is working well and understand where improvements are needed. Through a clear **“You Said, We Did”** approach, we will also show how people’s views are influencing change.

This will include stronger equality monitoring so we understand who we are hearing from, who we may not be hearing from, and whether people need different ways to share their views.

The overall aim is to place people’s experiences at the centre of service improvement and develop a better understanding of the difference Adult Social Care is making to people’s lives.

Our commitment

The improvement work described in this report will only make a difference if it is applied consistently across every part of Adult Social Care, including operational teams, commissioning, quality assurance, complaints, finance and provider services.

We will therefore continue to strengthen ownership, follow-up and oversight so that learning is not held in one place but is shared and acted on across the whole of adult social care.

Thank you to everyone who shared feedback during the year. All feedback helps us understand what good support looks like. Complaints and concerns help us see where we need to do better. We will keep listening, learning and improving so that adults, unpaid carers and communities across Gloucestershire receive care and support that is respectful, timely, clear and focused on what matters to them.

9. Appendix 1

Appendix 1 summarises the reasons people gave for making a complaint in 2025/26. Adult Social Care received 78 complaints during the year, but some people complained about more than one issue. This means the totals in this table will not add up to 78. The most common concern was communication. People told us they wanted clearer information, quicker replies, better explanations about decisions, and to be kept informed when things changed. Charging and financial assessment issues were also a strong theme, especially where people were unclear about invoices, contributions, disability-related expenditure or changes to financial support. Other complaints related to the quality or appropriateness of services, delays, assessment decisions, delivery of support, staff approach and disputed decisions. Overall, the reasons show that people want Adult Social Care to be clearer, more joined up, timelier and easier to understand.

Theme	Reason given	Number	Theme total
 Communication	Mishandling of information, not complying with GDPR, data breach	1	47
	Delay in provision of information, response, returned contact	17	
	Not being kept informed or involved, not being listened to	7	
	Information, policy or plan not properly explained	22	
	No or little communication regarding absence, cancellation or lateness	0	
	Relevant staff not being available at time of contact	0	
 Quantity, frequency or charge	Inappropriate charge for service, all disability related expenditure not considered	34	36
	'Tax payers' money wasted	0	
	Unhappy with changes to financial support	2	
	Decision not provided within given timescales	1	4
	Too long to solve overpayment issue with home or family	0	

Theme	Reason given	Number	Theme total
 Delay in decision making	Too long to solve issue with funding/contributions to care	3	1
	Discriminated against due to age	0	
	Discriminated against due to gender	0	
	Discriminated against due to race or nationality	0	
	Discriminated against due to religion	0	
	Discriminated against due to class or on a personal level	0	
	Discriminated against due to mental or physical health or disabilities	1	
 Discrimination			
 Eligibility and assessment	Decision to provide home care not residential care	0	14
	Unhappy with number of home calls offered	0	
	Decision to provide respite care in hospital not at home	0	
	Unhappy with outcome of care needs assessment	4	
	Unhappy with outcome of FAB assessment	10	
 Unwelcome or disputed decision	Decision to not fund Shared Lives carers at fostering rate	0	4
	Decision not to re-imburse costs	0	
	Outcome of Safeguarding enquiry	0	
	Individual's request for additional funds refused	0	
	Additional funding not agreed for nursing placement	0	
	Decision to place SU at different home for respite	0	
	Inappropriate DOLS or Best Interest decision	1	
	Decision to move SU back into their own home rather than with relatives	0	

Theme	Reason given	Number	Theme total
	Decision to move SU from or to residential placement	2	
 Delivery or non-delivery	Equipment not delivered or collected when promised or within a reasonable timescale	0	22
	Care needs assessment/financial assessment took too long or was never started	8	
	Carers assessment not completed or referred	0	
	Delay in finding suitable placement	1	
	Delay in applying FNC or CHC or correct charge to GCC system	0	
	Limited or no support provided, support not provided in a timely way following assessment	10	
 Quality or appropriateness	Quality of charging process	1	33
	Errors made in assessment, letters, statements, minutes, payments	0	
	Person's wishes overlooked by decision	5	
	SU managed by incorrect Social Work Team	0	
	Key safe damaged by staff	0	
	Quality of community meals or lateness of delivery	0	
	Telecare/GIS equipment not working correctly, unhappy with service	0	
	Reduction of care or support/care or support options offered not appropriate	3	
	No benefit seen from GCC's involvement	0	
	Quality of residential, nursing, respite care	2	
	Quality of supported living provision	1	
	Quality of domiciliary care	4	
	Inappropriately chasing a debt	3	
	Errors with invoice, invoice received late, time taken to adjust invoice	1	
	Incorrect Mental Capacity Assessment	1	

Theme	Reason given	Number	Theme total
 Staff attitude or behaviour	Staff member displaying a lack of empathy or being unhelpful / unprofessional	7	18
	Staff member displaying a lack of honesty	2	
	Staff member displaying a lack of knowledge or competence	1	
	Staff member not listening to individuals' wishes or pushing their own agenda	2	
	Staff member not talking to interested parties in the case or listening to other professionals	1	
	Staff member displaying rude or aggressive behaviour	5	

